THE JUNIOR BOOKSHELF

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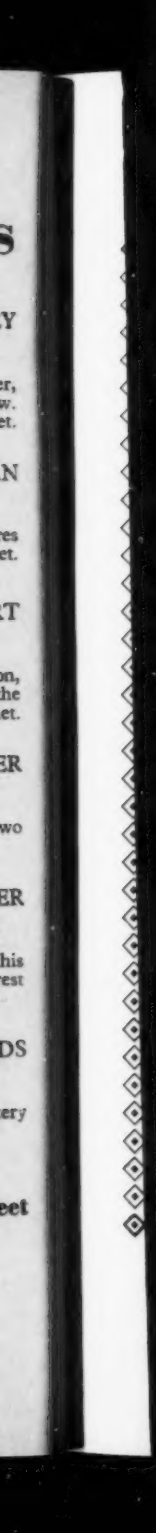

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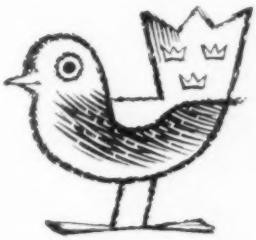

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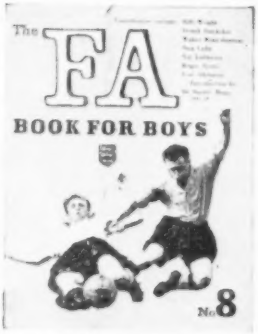

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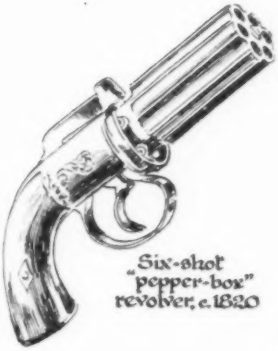

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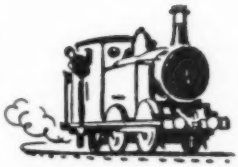

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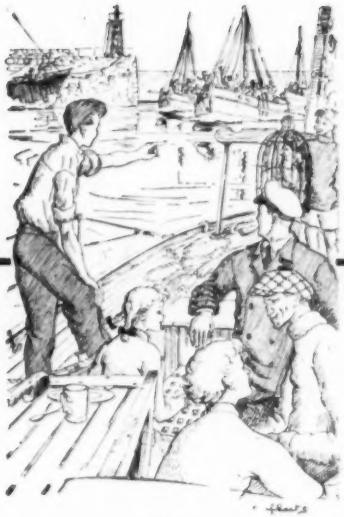

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Prigs, Geniuses and Others

Some Thoughts on Musical Stories

By R. DENNISTON

IN my young days — twenty years ago, man, National Serviceman and boy — music was the be all and end all of my life. But not until quite recently have I become aware that books are written for — and presumably read by — people such as I was. Riding, going to school, playing out of doors with friends — these activities form the basis of many books, but music seems to be different. There was one exception to this — Percy Scholes' *Complete Book of the Great Musicians* was one that required reading, in the sense that I could repeat passages from

it by heart; at a later stage our dog ate my copy, and it was rebound with lovely speckly edges. But somehow I didn't want to read it after that. And then, of course, there was the *Oxford Companion to Music*, by the same indefatigable author. But that one had pictures by Batt and thousands of fascinating little photographs of people like J. B. Dukes and diagrams of Mozart's ear. But on the whole I did not read about music; my time was spent playing, not very well but better than some. I had to go to school, and later to boarding school, but always my spare time was spent practising. In the holidays I played for hours. As I grew up there was less time for music when it became obvious I would never make a "professional," but that did not stop me playing. Even now I play, although I no longer practise — when I should be reading.

There is a point in this premature reminiscing. Music, for those keen enough to pursue it rather than resign themselves to the goading of parents, is an all-embracing activity. There is such a lot to learn. Not just the notes; not just technique, the higher mysteries of weight touch and arm rotation; not just pieces or interpretation or a repertoire. There is the history of music, the theory of music; something about the orchestra, orchestral instruments; singing parts in a choir or a madrigal group. There is no end to it, and no hope of mastering more than the barest outlines. And always it is practice that matters most — sitting at the piano for hours and hours and hammering out the same phrase hundreds of times, mastering it by infinitesimal stages. Small wonder, perhaps, that young musicians cannot stop to read novels with a musical background. They are not being prigs or geniuses. They are just too occupied in other ways.

However, supposing any of them stopped practising long enough to ask for a story about music, what is there to offer? Recently I have had occasion, belatedly, to investigate this question. There are a number of children's stories in which music figures more or less prominently. Most of them, whatever their entertainment value, may be disregarded, not just from the instructional point of view, but because musicians, young and old, will recognise at once that their authors simply do not know what they are talking about. Here is an example (without acknowledgments). Into a perfectly reasonable children's adventure story there enters Leopold Andreas, the famous pianist ("Well, I am a bit of a pianist, though it's nice of you to add the other bit"). Andreas, a chapter or so later, "cast one startled glance over his shoulder, took in the rapt expression of the boy as his bow swept over the strings, and continued to play just as before, then subtly decreased his tone till his playing became an accompaniment to Juan's melody." Juan is the child prodigy, pretty well untutored, of course. (Compare, elsewhere: "I heard you singing. How have you managed to keep that voice a secret for so long?") A few months later Juan plays at his first public concert; between times he plays "some of Mozart's variations" and finally, "If you will just fix your eyes on all of us, you won't need to try very hard, Juan. The music will come of itself." "Right, Susan, I will." Warm hand-clasp — "I must run now before the orchestra begins." *Mirabile dictu* he is an overwhelming success, he smiles a little queer whimsical smile and the roars of applause break out. The point need not be laboured. Stories about young musicians must, almost inevitably, be about one talented performer. The success story formula is the only one applicable. Between the

breathless gasp of admiration in chapter 3 and the storms of applause 200 pages later there may be variations, but not many.

Kitty Barne, the most popular and in many ways the best writer of music stories, sticks pretty closely to the formula; but she is helped first because she knows about music from the inside, secondly because she has a sense of humour, can create good characters, and good caricatures when she is in doubt. The first point is vital. Nobody who knows anything about music is going to be hoodwinked by fictional geniuses and vague, metaphysical descriptions of musical emotions. Compare the vague and inaccurate "swept over the strings" with this excellent and characteristic passage from *Family Footlights* :

> "Axel seized the bow, looked at it sadly, unscrewed it a little, shook it, gave it one or two swift strokes on the resin; then he took the fiddle, detached Sally's black pad that hung lumpily from the chin rest, threw the silk handkerchief, its coverlet in the case, over his shoulder, tucked the thing firmly under his chin, and there it was — part of himself. Really, thought Gerda, it might be growing out of him, the way he holds it."

The problem which Kitty Barne has faced is how to combine integrity and probability with the glamour and emotion which is expected. Real life produces a negligible quantity of untutored geniuses, but a fair sprinkling of promising young performers. There are local music festivals and competitions to be won; scholarships to the RCM and the RAM ; Associated Board exams for those with a mind for them; and lots of semi-public occasions such as accompanying for choral practices, standing in at the piano for missing instruments in an amateur orchestral rehearsal, playing

the organ when the organist is on holiday. From these activities, the stuff of life for young musicians, Kitty Barne makes her stories. Each of them pulsates with life and love of music. *Musical Honours* is my favourite; but others may prefer the first one, *She shall have Music* or the latest, *Barbie,* with its endearing illustrations by Lane Foster.

It is a matter of personal preference but I find that Elfrida Vipont's two stories *The Lark in the Morning* and *The Lark on the Wing,* though less smooth and crisp and even than Kitty Barne's, are more moving and more memorable. Mrs. Vipont's moral convictions, of course, are abundantly evident; she has a firm belief in non-priggish goodness which is more than kindness, and she describes that happy, unsentimental living together that seems to be possible only among Quakers. I find myself initially so much in sympathy with this that perhaps I wax uncritical. Certainly her second book is less well-constructed than her first, and there is no reason offered for Laura's hatred — for in sum it amounts to this — of Kit Haverard. Her young men are inclined to woodenness, her old men slightly glamourized. These observations apply equally to most other women novelists. I commend wholeheartedly Mrs. Vipont's lightly drawn picture of a teen-age girl, uncertain emotionally, lacking confidence and the strength which understanding parents would give, slowly blossoming into a singer — a great singer perhaps, a professional one anyhow. Better than any "career book," *The Lark on the Wing* gives a rounded, honest and above all authentic picture of musical training. And the success, when it comes, is so deserved and described so delicately and kept so firmly *sub specie aeternitatis* that no criticism can be offered without appearing captious.

I have mentioned the failings, in a generous over-simplification, of women novelists. It is a remarkable fact that stories about music seem to be written exclusively by women, although in non-fiction Kitty Barne shares the honours (with her new series *Introducing Mozart, Handel,* and I hope others) with Percy Young (*Music is for You*) and Lionel Salter (*Going to a Concert*). Or it was remarkable until I was shown proofs of a book called *A Swarm in May* by William Mayne. Here there is no success story formula, indeed no formula at all, and hardly a story in the ordinary sense of the word. But it is brilliantly written, it describes the goings-on in a cathedral choir school as never before, and it cuts like a knife across all pre-conceived theories about those who write for children, musically or otherwise. Young musicians may be too intent on their practising to read musical stories, but here is something not on any account to be missed. It looks to me as if Oxford House have found the first man to write a musical story, as well as yet another Carnegie Medallist.

★ The Art of Beatrix Potter

By JANICE H. DOHM

THERE is a quality of genius in the little books of Beatrix Potter which emerges triumphantly from the worst that high-flown praise and studious research can do. This is fortunate, as the appearance of *The Art of Beatrix Potter* makes anything less than high-flown praise seem inadequate, and the need for more studious research seem desirable. Genius cannot be copied or analysed, but here it is seen in a more manageable form than usual, expressed on a miniature scale which a small child can enjoy, and thoughtfully provided with a fine range of documents and drawings by which its course may be charted. Although her chief virtue lies in her sheer delightfulness, there is no denying that the emotion supplied by childhood memories and later sharings with other children of the inimitable phrases and pictures, combined with some knowledge of the author's life, gives any new example of Beatrix Potter's work additional interest. This large and handsome collection might well interest even those unfamiliar with her work (if such there be), but it will be particularly appreciated by those who grew up on the Peter Rabbit books and who own Margaret Lane's perceptive biography *The Tale of Beatrix Potter*, which is a necessary supplement to the better understanding of this new material. Because the book adds to our knowledge of Beatrix Potter, and because the limited printing and four-guinea price may put it beyond the reach of some of her admirers, it seems that a fairly detailed description of and commentary on the contents is the best way of marking its publication.

★*The Art of Beatrix Potter*. Warne. 84/-.

It makes available a generous number (over 240) of drawings and paintings from picture letters, sketch-books, trial manuscripts and other sources. Mr. Leslie Linder, whose labour of love it is, was helped by the late Mr. W. A. Herring of Warnes in selecting and arranging the plates and must have had many difficult decisions to make, but aside from being rather uninformative throughout, deserves our gratitude. It is unfortunate that a short chronology, or perhaps the useful catalogue compiled by Mr. Linder for the collection at Hill Top House, could not have prefaced the plates instead of Miss Anne Carroll Moore's appreciation. This would have been most welcome in almost any other place for its affectionate portrait of Mrs. Heelis of Sawrey and the remarks on the policy of American children's librarians in the '20's, but has little connection with the plates that follow.

The plates are divided into two parts, and sub-divided into sections. Part One is on "Beatrix Potter — the Artist." The first two sections have dates, and dates and identification are assigned to some plates but not to others, and the pictures are not in chronological order, all rather confusing in the absence of any statement of policy on the labeling, especially since indication of period at least is sometimes provided by the biography. The first pictures, made between the ages of 9 - 17, are pretty much what might be expected from a reasonably gifted young art student — careful studies of flowers and fruit, and a sketch or two. Miss Lane mentions animal drawings made around the age of ten, some introducing mufflers and mantles, and it would be pleasant to know if any still exist. It might have been of interest, too, to see one of the three animal drawings made for the little Beatrix by her

father, and, if possible, some of her brother's early drawings, but it is something to have this record of her own thorough groundings in the accepted techniques.

The second section, of interiors made between her sixteenth and thirty-seventh years, and the third, of houses, villages, village scenes and landscapes made over a slightly longer period, show pencil, pen and water-colour work of considerable skill but no great personality, and most seem to have been made as a talented lady amateur's Victorian pastime. Many are very pleasing indeed, but they are chiefly necessary as a further reminder of the practice underlying the published work. With the fourth section, on gardens, plant studies and still life, the connection with the books begins to be felt. The plates are lovely in themselves, especially some of the flower studies, but the knowledge that *Benjamin Bunny* was in preparation when one group was made gives the work an air of purposefulness which may not be due only to imagination.

The fifth section goes back in time, with two butterfly drawings (made before the age of 25 if they are those made during visits to the Hatfield grandmother, mentioned in the biography) and some of the beautiful fungus paintings made between 1893-97. Made, the biography suggests, with half-formulated unfulfilled hopes, and it seems possible that the present publication of even a few of them might have pleased Mrs. Heelis more than all the other tributes accorded her (and very suspicious she was of some of *those*). At one time they must have seemed a symbol of plans gone awry, yet it was in the year in which they were begun that Noel Moore received the letter containing Peter Rabbit.

The sixth section is of animal studies, and the books seem closer still. Some are obviously drawn from museum specimens, some are of nursery pets or for gift cards, and all but the final, oddly amateurish painting of Kep the sheep-dog show the assured technique and the quality of identification with the subject which marks the illustrations. As Anthony Powe remarked in his "Punch" review, it is in this section that the awareness suddenly comes "that the artist has something absolutely original to say."

In Part Two — "Her art in relation to her books" — we see how well she was to say it. "Imaginary happenings in the animal world" is the title for the seventh section, and here is the Beatrix Potter world as well, showing the consistency of her vision throughout her life. The books were not manufactured to order for a publisher, but were selected from the long, continuous history of the animal world she had begun observing as a child and never ceased to relish even after she stopped communicating her accounts of it to the public at large. When the occasion demanded, her great care and skill provided us with a record of her imaginative insight into that world, but without artistic ability or an audience she would still have seen the animals as the characters we know. This fact is manifest in every reference to animals made in her letters, and in these early "imaginary happenings." The Rabbits' Christmas Party sequence is presumably the one referred to in the biography as a gift to her aunt, Lady Roscoe; the finish and characterization more than match Peter Rabbit's. The same is true of the rabbits' potting shed and mice's storeroom, perhaps the gifts to child-friends mentioned in the biography. Some of the drawings might have been left for the next section, on "Early ideas for illustrated books," like the sheet labelled "about 1893," showing one mouse

with a cradle, another drawing an M on a slate, foreshadowing the *Two Bad Mice* of 1904, and the undated picture of gardening guinea-pigs, which was used with very little alteration in *Appley Dapply* (planned in 1904, published 1917) and which is surely a companion piece to the picture shown for *Appley Dapply* in the ninth section.

The eighth section needs much more explanation, and includes material not hinted at even in the biography, though Miss Lane gives more information about the "Happy Pair" picture, here labelled only with the title and dated as "about 1890." The date *is* uncertain, and Miss Lane merely gives pre-1893, as the publishing partners, Hildscheimer and Faulkner, separated in that year, and both she and the present editors state the drawings were made to illustrate a set of verses. Beatrix Potter's own note is vague; she says that she sold designs for eleven Christmas cards to the firm in the '80's or '90's, adding that she "never liked the cards." It seems possible that she never knew they were published as a booklet, though Miss Lane believes she probably knew the author, Mr. Weatherley, whose name, like the publishers', is not given in this book.

For 1894 there is a Puss in Boots title page in the Dicky Doyle tradition, and from 1893-95 a series of Uncle Remus drawings, very expert but with decorated borders which produce a period effect not found in the later work. There is no indication of the plans behind these drawings, or for the exquisite series of paintings for *Three little mice* which follow them. The drawings of a Toads' tea-party, at a guess, might have been a trial for one of the nursery rhyme books, but the two Cinderella drawings would seem to have been gifts, the biography describing one as "given to

Norman Warne," which at least establishes the date as between 1902-5. Information would also be appreciated about the Aesop water-colours and about the highly amusing cartoon sketches of a guinea-pig at the dentist's, rather reminiscent of J. A. Shepard's work. But further information *is* supplied about the ill-starred *Little Pig Robinson*, the rather unsatisfactory book published in 1930. An attempt made in 1893 stuck at the ship, "Pound of Candles," and it is interesting to find here a picture letter written a year later which omits the ship's name, and reaches the desert island.

The whole of the *Squirrel Nutkin* picture-letter is included in the next section, The Books, some preliminary sketches and finished work, a splendid allowance. There are some sketchbook water-colours for this and more background studies for Benjamin Bunny as well, some shown opposite the published illustration. This juxtaposition of preparatory and published work is handled very effectively on many occasions and justifies the repetition of already available material. Otherwise, except for the treat of seeing the colours again in their original freshness after the dimness of post-war editions, it seems rather too much space has been allotted to known work, especially when nothing more is shown for some titles. The choice of a drawing used only in the first edition of *The Flopsy Bunnies* seems a better idea, but it is puzzling to find for *Johnny Townmouse* a pair of undated early drawings, perhaps from the Aesop attempt? But there are many bonuses in the way of alternative sketches and some facsimiles of original manuscript which add much to the section's value, while the *Pie and the Pattypan* pictures are another excellent example of the artist's use of her background studies.

The tenth section, a Miscellany, features some of the miniature letters, purporting to be the animals', sent to children in a tiny post-bag. Squirrel Nutkin's increasingly polite letters requesting his tail from Old Brown, Mrs. Tiggly-Winkle's client comparing notes on mislaid laundry and others demonstrate again the actuality and completeness of the world so vividly portrayed in the books. Mr. Linder's twenty-one photographs of Sawrey and Hill Top House show a number of views used in the books, as noted on the appropriate reproductions; an explanation of the purpose and position of the rooms at Hill Top would have completed the record, as a note on the first uniform-size editions of the books originally published with larger or panoramic formats would have completed the appendix, which lists the first appearance of each book and the existing translations. But all such quibbles are forgettable compared with the tremendous amount the book has to offer. Mr. Linder and his publishers have produced a book to treasure and to share, and it is heartily recommended to all and sundry.

It is to be hoped that it meets with a properly estatic reception, and encourages the publication of more Potterania in the near future — say, *The Letters of Beatrix Potter,* and the *Complete Sketchbooks and exercise-books* as a start. How else shall we learn more of the enticing entries in Mr. Linder's catalogue, such as the "Sly Old Cat," a panoramic story planned on the lines of *A Fierce Bad Rabbit,* and the exercise book of 1903 with the first drafts of *The Pie and the Patty-pan, The Tale of Tuppeny* and *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*? And what were the rhymes in the privately-printed *Tailor of Gloucester* which were cut in the Warne edition, and some of the "most extremely odd" verses proposed to Norman Warne for *Appley*

Dapply? The catalogue notes one which sounds unusual for Beatrix Potter, in spite of her fungi drawings — mushrooms "dancing in the moonlight with little faces peeping underneath their caps." It is hard to read of such things without feeling the urge to turn researcher and chronicler, but it is enough for the present that we have such a fascinating new record as that provided by *The Art of Beatrix Potter.*

Illustration by M. L. Foster from *Lebanon Adventure* (Dent)

Yes, It Must Be Tenniel

IN a letter published in *The Junior Bookshelf*, some time ago, Mr. M. S. Crouch asked, "Must it be Tenniel?" and suggested that new illustrations might shed new light on the two Alice books. Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge has said much the same thing in his introduction to the double edition recently illustrated by Mervyn Peake, and indeed, it is a question asked quite often, perhaps because it seems quite logical and is easier to defend than it is to deny. For anyone who can defend such a position is obviously not much personally involved, whereas the Tenniel advocates are invariably involved in a rather emotional way, and therefore too much excited to be logical, let alone convincing. But the very affection that keeps them from putting up a rational argument is a sort of proof of Tennial's irreplaceability, for few illustrators could rouse that degree of feeling. Certainly none of his successors could, for although some of their work has been passively, and passingly, admired as pretty or interesting, much has been downright poor, either keeping so near to Tenniel's prototypes as to seem unnecessary, or purposely departing so far as to lose sight of the text as well as of Tenniel.

The text and Tenniel are so closely associated that this is not surprising, nor is it altogether surprising, in the absence of similar cases, that someone should support their separation on what would appear to be undeniably logical grounds. But who has shown better than the author of *Alice* that logic is not all? And what other author has taken such pains to insure that his illustrator should make every creation tally with his own? Not only did Carroll supervise the drawings with unusual vigilance; he also decided upon

their place in the text, and the whole format of the book in which they were to appear, making the present standard edition literally the authorised version. Besides this authority, Tenniel had another which is no longer obtainable — that of being a Victorian and a gentleman of the old school. Alice's appeal is timeless, but she is an essentially Victorian child, and like her literary and pictorial creators, saw things from a point of view it would seem impossible to recapture, serene, courteous and un-self-conscious. The pictures show us a real person — the very person who would think and behave like the child in the text ; everything is all of a piece.

And Tenniel was a great artist in black-and-white work at a time when such work was seen at its best. His drawings might be championed just to insure that children might still have access to at least one representative of a memorable period, though it has plenty of other qualities to recommend it, strength, sureness, accuracy and humour, all giving the impression he knew just what he wanted to show and how to show it, and that he took great delight in the process. His appeal is always direct, leaving his details to be relished after the central idea is assured, while his style is unmistakable, both in *Alice* and in his cartoons for "Punch," and eminently "quotable" as has been shown by their frequent use, with telling effect, in many cartoons since his day.

Alice is like a literary Mt. Everest — other illustrators may attempt it, but they must remember that Sir John's flag was there first, and *his* name enduringly linked with her creator's.

The New Books

FOR LIBRARIANS

DENT, H. C. *Books in your school.* 31 pp. 8½ × 5½ Paper . . . . . NBL.CUP 2/–

A very disappointing pamphlet. When *Books in your School* was first announced we looked forward to something which would be of real value and help in solving the problem of providing worthwhile books in quantity in schools. Instead we have been given a survey of the present situation, with reasons for past deficiencies, most of which are already only too well known. Mr. Dent has nothing new to tell us, and whereas it is always encouraging to have another voice crying in support of better school libraries and more attractive text-books, we should have listened more attentively had we found that the voice had some new constructive ideas to offer. As it is, here is another echo of what has already been said many times.

SLOANE, W. *Children's books in England and America in the Seventeenth Century.* 251 pp. 9¼ × 6 . . . Columbia University Press (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege) 40/–

"A History and a Checklist, together with 'The Young Christian's Library', the first printed catalogue of books for children" — and though the checklist is the chief reason for the book's publication, it is the history which is most important to the general reader. For this is not a book for specialists only, but an unusually perceptive account of the forces affecting children's literature at any time — attitudes of adults towards children, education and prevailing beliefs, the children's reaction to what is offered, the publisher's commercial interest and the material offered to adults as well. In less than one hundred pages Mr. Sloane interprets his findings most lucidly and outlines the development of early books in an enlivening way without once subscribing to the popular theory that early authors were all prigs or hypocrites.

He shows how the little booklets that seem so alien today (and most of the 261 in his definitive list do seem alien) were all of a piece with their surroundings; he stresses that litera-

ture prepared for children *always* reflects the wholly adult sentiment of its time, and sometimes he suggests that the 17th century sentiment was more honest than some 20th century varieties.

The list itself would seem invaluable for collectors, or for historians of children's literature, and the introduction and notes should be available to all who work with children's books. The documentation seems excellent and Mr. Sloane makes his policy and procedure very definite and removes several misconceptions about his period, when traditional tales were not yet a part of "children's literature" and hell-fire and brimstone were still to come. The appendix contains a facsimile of a list of books recommended for children in 1710, which incorporates some surprisingly modern listing techniques.

Altogether a book that is impressively and never oppressively thorough, very well organised and extremely readable.

FOR CHILDREN UNDER TEN

BAKER, M. J. *The Wonderful Wellington boots*
Illus. by T. Freeman. 120 pp. $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$
Brockhampton 6/-

This is the best collection to come from Miss Baker for some time, making better use of the Nesbit-type of ingredients she seems determined to use than earlier books, perhaps because she does not lean on it so heavily. The stories are slight, and their outcome not surprising, but each centres round a sound idea which is well worked out. Some of the asides in earlier stories tended to show off "county-gentry" notions in a self-conscious way, but in this book the little asides more often add to the story in hand. Of the eight stories, four involve magic and four reality. Though the M. J. Baker books still lack the extra satisfaction given by the slightly different fantasies of Margaret Baker, readers who confuse the two need not worry over-much. Some well-worn themes are freshened up to fill a little reading-time quite happily. Mr. Freeman is able to overcome the use of one-colour patches better than other Brock illustrators, and the book looks — and is — easy-reading.

BERG, L. *The story of the little car.* Illus. by Sillince. 56 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Epworth 4/-

Since the inauguration of "Listen with Mother" the market has been flooded with simple-minded little tales for the very youngest listeners, and every addition seems one too many. However, Mrs. Berg's stories make use of the now over-familiar material very well. This anthropomorphisized little car seems the product of the author's imagination and not just a making use of current conventions, and though the stories are exceedingly brief and exceedingly young in interest, they have real flavour, show observation of the ways of cars and small children, and should stand up to the necessary repetition. The humour is original, the little car engaging, and there are some quiet, almost wistful passages to match the bits sure to make listeners chuckle.

DILLON, E. *The Wild Little House.* Illus. by V. H. Drummond. 31 pp. 10 × 7½ . . Faber 8/6

It must be every writer of fantasy's dream to be illustrated by Violet Drummond. Mr. Dillon's dream has come true and he deserves his good fortune. His story of the little house which yearned for the sea is gay, stylish and individual; it has just the right kind of topsy-turvy seriousness for picture book treatment, and, if the story is a little long, its words and phrases have an inevitable quality which defeats pruning. I liked the story immensely and believe that children will take it straight to their hearts.

FARJEON, E. *The Glass Slipper.* Illus. by E. H. Shepard. 176 pp. 8½ × 5½ . . O.U.P. 10/6

Miss Farjeon does it again. When did she ever fail? Her Cinderella play was perhaps the loveliest Christmas play in this century. Now she has turned it into a delightful novel, to which Mr. Shepard has added characteristic decorations.

A modern writer alters the essentials of an ancient story at her peril. What she may do is to give to the thin firm outlines of the original a local habitation and a name. Miss Farjeon most skilfully fills out her story with colourful detail which is true to the spirit of *Cinderella.* Even the stepmother, a shockingly nasty character, is a necessary agent in the story; and how delightful a part do the "Things," the clock, the broom and the other very animated inanimate friends of Cinderella, play in this enchanting comedy.

Miss Farjeon is above and under all a poet, and this is a poetical novel, not only in the many charming lyrics scattered so generously over the pages, but in the spirit, gay, wayward, melancholy, which underlies the action. She has been more elevated, more profound, even more gay than she is in *The Glass Slipper* but here, in a story which all children love, she is by turns grave, gay, dramatic and lyrical.

FRY, R. K. *The Wind Call.* Illus. by the author 115 pp. 7½ × 5½ . . . . . Dent 8/6

If the charm of this little book is a shade old-fashioned and faded, it is none-the-less genuine. Miss Fry knows and loves all the works of wild nature, and her interpretation is romantic and poetical rather than sentimental. It is not only the animals who hear the magic of the wind call which sends them south in the autumn; her readers hear it clearly and sweetly in her gentle, evocative prose, as they see the loveliness of the seasons' change in her charming pictures.

HYDE, G. *Far and Away the Best.* Illus. by G. Wood. 190 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Bles 9/6

Some of the worst, as well as the best, children's books were written for a particular child. This is perhaps not among the worst; it is unfortunately not very good. The margin between fantasy and whimsy is a narrow one, and whimsy is a dread abyss. I find this story full of good ideas, hardly one of which was fully realised; full, too, of silly jokes which might amuse an indulgent niece but which look painfully thin in print. I think that few children will bother to read to the end, and will consequently be spared the annoyance of finding that the story in fact has neither end nor point.

JANSSON, T. *Moominsummer Madness.* Illus. by the author. 163 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . Benn 8/6

I was asked recently for what age-group the Moomin books were intended, and found no short answer possible. Like so many questions about children's books this requires not an answer but a conversion to an entirely different approach to the subject and the understanding that such questions simply are not relevant. The Moomins appeal to those people of all ages who like this particular type of fancy, just as the early Chaplin films appeal to all ages who like that sort of comedy. Hundreds must be charmed almost against their will by Miss Jansson's little strip about the Moomins in *The Evening News*,

yet who can define what the charm is? Hers is a most unique creation, and her strange creatures inhabiting a world of their own are somehow immediately acceptable as real characters in a believable setting. A great deal happens in Moominland without the action seeming cluttered, but while the action is intriguing, the stories are probably most relished for the way in which the characters react to unexpected situations, especially the Moomins themselves, surely some of the most engaging and amusing characters in children's books today. Their matter-of-fact reception of the flood which covers their home, their adjustment to life in a floating theatre and their immediate decision to stage a performance when they learn what theatres are for are entirely characteristic. Snufkin turns up only towards the close of the book, Sniff not at all, but there are many new beings introduced, notably poor Misabel, the Whomper, some new Hemulens (one "quite a failure from a hemulic point of view"), a Fillyjonk and some little woodsies. As usual the author is in control of all, giving the feeling that she knows exactly what each is like and is not just sticking in an invented funny person but is reporting on an actual being. Her drawings always add much to the books, showing the same humour, skill and affection for the characters as the text. Indeed the books show in their production alone with their clear, clean format and choice of running titles, that the author respects both her own work and her audience. There is nothing here to dull the appetite for good reading and much to preserve and develop the reader's appreciation of wit, sympathy and style. My own sympathy at the moment is for those readers so taken with their own notion of being superior that they feel too old or too serious to fall under the spell of the Moomins.

KASTNER, E. *The Animals' conference.* Illus. by W. Trier. 64 pp. $11\frac{1}{4} \times 8$ . . Collins 12/6

This "story for children and other understanding people" is presumably intended to further the cause of world peace, though neither the confusion nor the over-simplification of the issues involved has helped before. Children may enjoy skimming through it to see the jolly-coloured cartoon-like drawings detailing the animals' preparations and travel arrangements en route to Animal Skyscraper, but it's unlikely they will learn any "messages" except the following: (1) That children are

better than adults; (2) That animals are better than humans; (3) That uniforms and documents are the cause of world unrest.

The animals open the conference by demanding that war, hardship and revolution be outlawed. When the human conference at Capetown refuses to comply, rodents are sent to destroy the documents and clothes-moths destroy all uniforms on their wearers. As a last resort all the world's children are Pied Pipered away until the humans grant the animals their treaty. All is conceded them: the abolition of frontiers, disbandment of armed forces, police forces allowed only bows and arrows (an odd provision), minimum number of officials and documents, even higher salaries for educators. This is apparently all that stands between us and peace, and the animals return home happy, having won what they wanted — those five promises on a scrap of paper.

KOHL, M. AND YOUNG, F. *Games for children.* Illus. by P. Miller. 191 pp. 8¼ × 5¼ . . Faber 10/6

Divided into three sections: for 4-6, 7-9 and 10–12 year old parties, each with an introduction about the purpose of the games and a concluding section about party plans and refreshments, this would be quite a handy book for parents to refer to. It would seem less useful for children themselves, as the directions are given very briefly and seldom illustrated, and the advice is all for adults. Lists of indoor, outdoor, quiet, paper and no-preparation games are included, and a chart showing type, number of players, age-group and very approximate playing time, but the age-groups listed refer to the three used for this book only, and no extensions are mentioned, though some similar games are described in all three sections. Similar games within a single section are often separated, too, though it would help to have variations on one type kept together. However, this compares well with the other books now available on children's games; the American source is occasionally obvious but should not prevent its use here, and the advisory passages are very sensible.

MOMMENS, N. *Dib-Dib and the Red Indians.* Illus. by the author. 28 pp. (unp). 10 × 7½ . Faber 8/6

Fifofus' adventures with the Red Indians were quite entertaining, and Dib-Dib the duck's seem even better though they may not be to every reader's taste. Many children (and readers-aloud) will enjoy both the matter-of-fact account of

the Indian Chief's birthday party and Dib-Dib's rescue of the flying suet pudding, and the light-hearted drawings of the strange assortment of guests, Leatherleg the robber, and the games. Text and illustrations have an individuality and drollness that are quite refreshing, and the odd combination of Wild West figures and a kingdom of ducks adds up to very good fun. Purple-pinks and yellow also seem an odd combination but are used effectively, and the book is well produced.

NEURATH, M. *The wonder world of the deep sea*
Illus. 36 pp. 8½ × 7½ . . . Parrish 7/6

An addition to the Parrish Colour Books and a companion to *The Wonder World of the Sea-shore,* this book portrays by means of Isotype illustrations and the minimum of explanation some of the stranger denizens of the deep. Although too elementary to satisfy the avid young naturalist, these books may well inspire such an interest and at least acquaint the uninspirable with some painless general knowledge. They also supply a clear introduction to the concept of a balance of nature and the unbelievable variety of creation and the marvels of animal adaptation. The material in this new book is so fascinating that one wishes it would tell even more, which is probably the surest proof that it fulfils its function. As it can be read aloud to quite young children (unless susceptible to nightmares) parents would be well advised to have a more informative book on hand in order to answer all the questions Mrs. Neurath's work is sure to bring forth.

SMILEY, L. *Come Shopping.* Illus. by the author
32 pp. 10 × 7½. Oblong Boards . Faber 7/6

This is a nice, bad book. The pictures are amateurish, the story fragmentary; but the book has real personality and charm. Mr. Snodgrass's shop is the one we all know in our favourite village, and he and his sisters are the kindly unbusinesslike folk we should like to see achieve success. Children will, I think, enjoy the unpretentious style and will like to pick out the simple little jokes with which each crude picture is packed.

TOMPKINS, J. *The Porcupine twins.* Illus. by K. Wiese. 120 pp. 8½ × 6 . . . Warne 6/–

Although undistinguished in their writing, and primary school in tone, the animal twin books do provide an elementary introduction to the unfamiliar animals of North-East America,

and Kurt Wiese's skilful drawings make them look very inviting. The print is clear, the factual information on habits accurate, the amount of humanisation less than usual in this instance. The material could be compressed into a chapter or two, and such condescending explanations as "magic coats" might have been omitted, but the porcupines are unexpectedly amusing, and their mild adventures make passable reading for junior school children.

VAN BREDA, A. *Adventures with paper.* Illus. by the author. 133 pp. 8½ × 6¼ . . . Faber 8/6

An extension of the material given in *Pleasure with Paper*, this book is also planned so that the user who tries each item in the order given will easily acquire the techniques necessary for the more complex structures. The author hopes that his methods of construction will spur users on to think up new patterns of their own. His own experimentation has conjured up patterns for six dogs in various positions, farmyard and zoo animals, doll-houses and furniture, boats, vehicles and bridges, Christmas decorations, and several kinds of kites, as well as a good sprinkling of those little tricks and optical illusions which always delight children. The equipment could not be less expensive nor easier to obtain, the diagrams and step-by-step directions are unusually clear, and the finished products are surprisingly effective considering the simplicity of their manufacture. Some items could be made by kindergarten pupils and all could be managed by a handy eleven-year old. Mr. Van Breda's books would seem indispensable for nursery, library or schoolroom, and are highly recommended for the home.

UTTLEY, A. *The Flower show.* Illus. by K. Wigglesworth. 65 pp. 7 × 5½ . Heinemann 3/6

UTTLEY, A. *The Mouse telegrams.* Illus. by K. Wigglesworth. 65 pp. 7 × 5½ . Heinemann 3/6

Two new additions to the "Little Brown Mouse" books, the first having fewer words to the page than the rest of the series, and both maintaining the standard set by Mrs. Uttley's previous picture-books. Snug and Serena spend a night exploring a human flower show and making their own miniature floral arrangements, and when Serena has her Spring birthday Snug sends a Dandy-lion telegram into the blue which brings the stoat round with a trap. Mrs. Uttley's writing

always has real flavour and her countryside material has a timeless appeal. Adults reading aloud can find pleasure in these brief tales, while the small listener, for whom they were primarily written, will revel in the details and the dialogue.

Miss Wigglesworth's figures in the second book tend to look superimposed on a rather hazy background, but her colours and little creatures are nice, and her work matches the text well without looking like a mere copy of earlier picture-book artists.

FOR CHILDREN FROM TEN TO FOURTEEN

BALCH, G. *Indian Saddle-Up.* Illus. by R. Frankenberg. 191 pp. 7½ × 5 . Hutchinson 6/–

This carefully told tale is, taken as a whole, an attempt to tell the story of the discovery (no other word will do) of the horse by the Red Indians. Apart from the fact that almost no indication of period is given it is for the most part well done and gains some emotional value from the fact that the first "brave" to persuade a horse to let him bestride it in the manner of fabled white men is a young cripple. His chase of a stray saddlehorse, aided by Old Man Crazy who claimed to have seen the wonder of men on beasts, is long and painstaking and mixed up with the tribal wars between the Comanches and the Utes, in which mastery over the horse eventually gives the Comanches superiority, if the story is to be wholly believed. Perhaps the main premises of the tale are somewhat suspect but the narrative of tracking and hunting is diverting and at times exciting.

BAUMANN, H. *The Caves of the Great Hunters* Illus. 159 pp. 8½ × 5½ . . Hutchinson 10/6

Already hailed on the other side of the Atlantic for the quality of its story and production, this fictionized account of the discovery and interpretation of the chief cave-paintings of France and Spain should inspire the most disinterested child with some feeling for the subject. The lure of caves as such provides a good beginning, when the four boys follow the dog into the Lascaux hillside, but more and more interests are stimulated as the Abbé Breuil tells them of earlier finds, all made by children. An amazing amount of information is given in highly readable form, and many of the anecdotes

are full of drama, like the one in which the dumb artist regains his speech at the sight of the Altimara bison. And there is the bison, on the opposite page, for the wonderful array of reproductions has been chosen and placed with particular care, and each point is illustrated at exactly the right moment. However fascinating the history of discovery and detection, and admirable the exposition of their purpose, the introduction to the paintings themselves is probably the major contribution of the book. The use of oils, crayons and sprays in their creation comes as a surprise, but the power of the drawings is always the most surprising thing, however often they are seen. Readers of all ages may well resolve to see the actual caves some day, and many will want to read more about such things as anthropology, art, caves and prehistory after such an introduction, but it is perhaps to those children with an urge to create themselves, especially those who draw animals, that the book will seem the greatest revelation.

BENARY, M. *Rowan Farm.* 310 pp. 8 × 5½
Macmillan 10/6

As is the way of sequels, this book is less perfect than its predecessor, *The Ark,* being more loosely constructed, more concerned with the immediate present, and probably attempting too much. It still has much to recommend it and the Lechows' projects and personalities are still worth recording. The story contains much that will please those in search of light entertainment and also contrives to deal with personal and public matters of interest to thoughtful adolescents — and it is the air of contrivance which keeps the book below the level established by *The Ark.* However, there are many good scenes and real, vigorous people, notably the enterprising schoolmaster, a war cripple, who encourages his pupils to build a home for returning veterans in spite of local opposition and red tape. Mrs. Benary respects her readers' right to the truth; she is not afraid to mention death and the existence of difficult problems, and by neither over-emphasizing nor understating, gives a balanced picture of post-war German life. She conveys something of the urgency with which these friendly and responsible young people cut through red-tape and apathy and those conventions which could obtain only when their world was more secure and sheltered. Their reforming zeal is necessary if the more permanent values of sympathy, hope and faith are to be kept alive, and Mrs. Benary is very much

on the side of life. Her positive approach, her sanity and understanding, keep this book from floundering in the multiplicity of incident.

BROOKS, P. *The Treasure of the Mountain.* Illus. by C. Brooks. 191 pp. 7½ × 5¼ . Dent 9/6

Three boys, holidaying in Wales, meet two suspicious looking characters while climbing a nearby mountain. These men, who are obviously neither climbers nor shepherds, appear to be searching for something and the boys determine to investigate their rather weird behaviour. With the later help of a private detective they succeed in handing these men over to the police and in recovering their hoard of hidden stolen jewels. The popular "treasure" story offers little scope for originality and the general impression here is one of another item of mass production. Closer reading, however, reveals an author's feeling for, and knowledge of ,the Welsh countryside and this intimacy gives a breath of fresh air to the usually stifled theme. Her acquaintance with young boys has led, too, to some lively chatter that adds a sprightliness to the scene. There are many of the usual faults here — boys with too much licence and too much cleverness, and a too obvious sequel to events — but the virtues atone for some of the jarring inadequacies and the sincerity raises it a little 'higher than many of its type. The production is typical of the publisher's usual good work.

CAPON, P. *Phobos, the robot planet.* 178 pp. 7½ × 5 Heinemann 10/6

After a succession of poorly conceived, written and produced science-fiction books, it is pleasant to find an exception which proves the general rule to be unnecessary. Superficially there is not a great deal to distinguish this from the ordinary S-F book, but its construction is tighter, its writing neater, and its humans, though lightly sketched in, *are* humans and not the dreary set of heroic youths and comic eccentrics usually "used" in science-fiction, with their schoolboy minds and barrack-room back-chat. The scientific aspects of Mr. Capon's books are no more difficult than those in the average S-F story, and are very ingenious, with well-worked out details, and he does not attempt to deal with world peace or politics to come. An English painter, his daughter, and their American guest are kidnapped by the planet Phobos and find another American already there. This supplies the American

slang which is evidently essential to so many S-F authors, but in this case it really does seem to add colour. Bill is a quick-witted sort and has learned enough of the self-maintaining electronic brain which *is* Phobos (built and left behind by the migrant Martians) to plan an escape. The two young people have an exciting trip to Mars before the escape is successfully carried out. The story is intriguing throughout, the humour wry but neat, and there is something rather sad about the destruction of the "brain," unfeeling mechanism though it is. Mr. Capon seems to have enjoyed himself, and the result is much better than the usual "pot-boiler" which gains acceptance merely because it is labelled "science-fiction."

CARTER, B. AND FROSTICK, N. *Motor Racing.* Illus. 91 pp. 8½ × 6¾ . . . . Bodley Head 10/-

This is a guide for the younger enthusiast and those who are interested in this sport will read it with avidity. It contains much useful technical information, maps of the principal racing circuits, flags and signals, lists of drivers, etc., and there are fifty excellent action photographs taken by the well-known Motor Racing Photographer, Louis Klemantaski. The standard of book production is poor; the style of writing straightforward and lively.

CATHERALL, A. *Wild Goose Saboteur.* Illus. by K. Brookes. 191 pp. 7⅝ × 5¼ . . Dent 9/6

Sam Dodds, the shy member of a group of six Scouts calling themselves Adventurers Limited, decides to try to help a pink-footed goose which has damaged itself with wire, but finds himself led into a complicated plot to ruin the head of a ship-building firm about to launch its newest and biggest ship. Conflicting loyalties complicate Sam's situation further. Disbelief and even discredit assail his stoic qualities and try his patience but his consistency of character and determination bring him at last to a happy conclusion. The plot is too facile for realism and the solution too tricky for credulity but the writing is clear and only a little sentimental. While not an original or stirring effort it will meet the needs of undemanding and not too able readers.

CHADWICK, D. *John of the Sirius.* Illus. by M. Senior. 244 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . . Nelson 8/6

This is a well-produced book and a story which might have turned out very well. What more full of possibilities

for two lively children than a voyage with their father and mother in one of the pioneering ships to Botany Bay? And of course adventures do come. There is exploring the ship and making friends with the sailors from the Commodore himself to the ship's cook. There is climbing the rigging and falling overboard, birthdays at sea, visiting in port, climbing Table Mountain, eating a first orange and banana, crossing the line, sighting New South Wales, facing the aborigines, landing at Sydney Harbour. But it fails because it is all shallowly seen. These are the adventures of a very small boy, described as only he would see them. The grand drama of the adventure slides by, the reader might just as well be voyaging round the Serpentine. A parent reading aloud and able to embroider Miss Chadwick's thin script from personal experience, would make a fine romantic adventure of John's journey. But the book itself gives the impression that it has been written up from only a little study of the events and route. Ineffective line drawings do not help to give any real dimension to the story.

COLLING, S. *Frogmorton.* Illus. by E. H. Shepard
159 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . . . Collins 8/6

Because it is so difficult to define the excellence of Kenneth Grahame and A. A. Milne some adults will undoubtedly accept this little book as comparable because it copies some of their stylistic devices. But apart from a few happy phrases and a certain fluency it is rather a dreadful book. Its frog is a hunting-shootin' old-squire clubman whose proportions somehow allow him to own a dog and call Sir Gordon Richards by his first name at the same time. His tortoise friend, a combination of Eeyore and Mole watered down by his everlasting sobs of self-pity, is an even more embarrassing beast. They spend Christmas together at Frogmorton Hall and enter a racehorse at Ascot to save the Hall from being sold for taxes. References to the virtues of the aristocracy, the steward of the Jockey Club, etc., won't mean much to modern children, even if they read "The Tatler," and they might be puzzled by the assumption that television is vulgar, especially after Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer (surely a more vulgar object), turns up in the Olde Englishe village. There is little consistency or coherence, and though the author chose her models from the best, her treatment suggests she does not appreciate their true quality; certainly the result is

glib but glutinous. Mr. Shepard cannot do less than well, and it is unfortunate that the inimitable illustrator of the genuine article should have been involved in this imitation product.

DENHAM, S. *Let's keep a Pet.* Illus. 186 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . . . . . Nelson 8/6

NORBURY, J. *Your Pets and Mine.* Illus. by P. Milne 118 pp. 8 × 5 . . . . . Parrish 8/6

These two books are both directed to younger children who are probably looking forward to acquiring a pet for the first time. Both are very simply written, both stress the dependence of the pet on its owner and the inadvisability (to put it mildly) of any child's owning a pet unless he, or she, is prepared to look after it properly. To take an animal, a bird or a fish into your home is to incur a big responsibility towards another living creature. Happiness and companionship will arise only when the boy or girl faces this mutual trust between pet and owner.

Chapters in both books give advice on keeping dogs, cats, birds, hamsters, guinea pigs, aquarium fish, and other small pets. Mr. Norbury is slightly more reminiscent, Mr. Denham sticks to facts easily worded. An interesting point about both these books is the similarity of approach and style — they might almost have come from the same pen. But each shows the author to be a man who understands the well-being of animals without merely sentimentalising over them. For sheer charm, the photographs in *Let's Keep a Pet* take some beating. The black and whites of *Your Pets* are plain and clear. Each is a book that can confidently be recommended to boys and girls who want to do right by their pets.

FENNER, P. R. (ED.) *Elephants, Elephants, Elephants* Illus. by M. de V. Lee. 239 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ Chatto 8/6

FENNER, P. R. (ED.) *Ghosts, Ghosts, Ghosts.* Illus. by M. de V. Lee. 223 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. Chatto 8/6

Miss Fenner has previously shown something of a gift for collecting anthologies of an original and varied kind and these additional "Triple Titles" maintain her good standard.

The Elephant book features tales of elephants in most likely circumstances, training, working, in circuses, at large, elephants of character, a rogue and a dwarf. Some are definitely modern, but the standard of the writing is never far

below the level of the enduring *Toomai of the Elephants.* The basic subject is of course a fertile one and even this select anthology does not exhaust the possibilities.

With ghosts we are on much more dangerous ground, especially in a book intended more than anything else for juvenile readers. The editor has shown excellent taste in choosing tales old and new which have all a note of humour or whimsy rather than fearsomeness. Even *The Cobra's Hood,* really a tale of retribution, is amusing rather than terrifying. A pity though, that there is not a little more of an English background to the tales in this and the companion volume.

GRAVENEY, T. AND STATHAM, B. *Instructions to Young Cricketers.* Illus. 110 pp. 8½ × 5½ Museum Press 9/6

This is the latest addition to the Brompton Library of books on sports and games specially intended for young people. Appropriately enough the joint authors of this work are two young England cricketers, who are, nevertheless, widely experienced in Test Match and County Cricket.

There is nothing new in this book. There are already fifty other good books in print giving precisely the same information and advice, yet as Voltaire said, when he was reminded that he repeated a certain statement over and over again: "And I shall go on repeating it until everybody is convinced."

Is the book worth buying? Yes, because it is a good book and there is little evidence that the state of English cricket is such that its sound advice is not needed. It is quite well produced and contains adequate diagrams, sketches and photographs.

GRAY, F. *The Children's picture book of ballet* Illus. 63 pp. . . . . Phoenix House 6/6

Some well-selected photographs of current performers and a few early prints will make this book of interest to children liking ballet. The appeal of the text is less certain — it assumes a fair amount of preknowledge, including some experiences of ballet lessons, and at the same time gives careful explanations of some points which would seem already familiar to a ballet pupil. There is a little history, a little advice, a few details, a few generalizations, and a last paragraph stating "You will see by now that other things besides the dancing go to make up any ballet," though music, scenery and mime have scarcely been

mentioned before. The idea of keeping text and pictures together so that the pictures would illustrate each point made in the text was excellent, but its carrying out is less satisfactory, and the pictures might as well have had a supplement to themselves. A few odd facts and ideas may be gathered from the text, but it is for the pictures that the book will be purchased, especially when they may be had at such a reasonable price. The binding is weak and will need reinforcing.

GRAY, N. S. *The Marvellous story of Puss in Boots* Illus. by J. J. Farjeon. 99 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. O.U.P. 8/6

Mr. Gray's fifth play shows that he has not lost his touch. His adaptation and expansion of Perrault's tale reads well and must be delightful on the stage, and his handling of the transformations and the appearance of Puss himself sounds practical. The dialogue, fanciful, often witty and sometimes poetic, is calculated to hold an adult audience and should be comprehensible to most children, and the action and cross-talk are the kind child audiences love. The final appearance of the ogre as a mouse-page to Puss rounds the whole off nicely. Miss Farjeon's decorations are good as drawings and as costume-information.

GUILLOT, R. *The Wind of Chance.* Illus. by P. Collot. 188 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . O.U.P. 9/6

Another fine strong adventure tale by the author of *Companions of Fortune* and other books, this one translated by Norman Dale. The steamship in which young Michel Santanrea stows away in Marseilles and the automobile at the timber-lord's headquarters on the Ivory Coast indicate a 20th century setting, but the story might be set in any period, concerning as it does the reaction of men to each other, to nature and to chance. Some of the characters and situations are familiar, in a cruder form, in formula-made boys' popular fiction, but aside from a few passages when the author seems over-impressed with his own profundity his vision and skill transform the old ingredients into a most absorbing story of one boy's gamble with fate. The gamble is won because he goes on to play a man's part in the gruelling timber trade of the rain-forests; it is very much a man's world, but girls as well as boys can enjoy the book and it seems likely to mean many things to many readers, both as a story and as an exciting reading experience.

There is a special atmosphere in all M. Guillot's books which seems particularly strong in this little volume, combining the dream-like aspects — in this case Michel's double, the old Spanish dreamer, the legendary adventurer Fabregasse, the nightmarish forest — with the reality of hard work, the fight for existence and the pleasures of being alive. One such pleasure might well be to be a boy of Michel's age and to hear with him the old Spaniard's answer to his question of what lies ahead — the unknown. Is there anything better in the world?

HEWETT, H. *Pantomime Christmas.* Illus. by T. Freeman. 167 pp. 8 × 5 . . . Dent 9/6

This new story of children on the stage compares more than favourably with those by Noel Streatfeild and others. It may be because 12 year old Karen Carr is not professionally minded when she is accidentally engaged for the Bath Pantomime — in any case there is less of the selfish ambition, rivalry and emphasis on money here (though Karen accepts the job in order to earn) and none of the bickering and cheekiness found in most books about child-actors. The little screen-star who is Jack to Karen's Jill has her moments of temper and temperament, but her behaviour is made understandable, and Karen's misunderstanding with the wardrobe mistress is shortly resolved. A fair amount of information about pantomime production is put across in a readable manner, and Karen's reactions as a non-professional keep the reader from feeling too much of an outsider. Karen is a nice, rather serious child, and aside from a few passages which might be described as aunt-like the author shows a good understanding of a 12 year old outlook. The people she meets in London and at Bath are warm-hearted and kindly without being saccharine, and the story runs smoothly. It makes no pretence of being an enduring contribution, but the competent telling and pleasing cast, as well as its theatrical background make it a book which can be safely recommended to those who like the Streatfeild books. Certainly I found it left a much nicer taste in my mind. Mr. Freeman's illustrations are seldom exciting, but always add to a book's attraction and show knowledge of the text.

HOGARTH, G. A. *The Funny Guy.* Illus. by F. Wegner. 224 pp. . . . H. Hamilton 10/6

Advance information made this sound like an odd choice for importation, suggesting a larger book with smaller print

and a story built round the "St. Nicholas" magazine. In fact it is a clear, quick-reading story which should appeal to girls between 9-12 in most countries. The background of a village near Boston in 1912 has much in common with villages of today, and the very human little story with its slightly Ugly Duckling theme would stand in any setting. Helen Hamilton's 12th birthday present of the magazine — instead of the hoped-for bicycle — does become one of the few bright spots in a troubled period, and those of us who knew that best of children's magazines are glad to think its name will now mean something to readers of this book. But the book's real centre is Helen's struggle, without much help from the well-meaning but too-busy adults around her, to regain her normal status after becoming the object of the unthinking ridicule of her class-mates. They have seized on the nickname of "the Fuuny Guy" with relish, led by two children who are more silly than vicious. Mrs. Hogarth wisely avoids too much self-pity by also showing how Helen's own thoughtlessness is responsible for some of her snowballing difficulties, just as she avoids the false moralizing of picking out and punishing separate sins with a sanctimonious air. In spite of Helen's trials this is a pleasant-tempered book; the whole problem is kept in perspective and because it is a genuine problem there is no need to turn the screw by inventing dense adults or nasty children. Many children should find something of themselves in Helen; perhaps some will also find through her story a little more sympathy with those whom they might otherwise call "funny guys"; in any case they should find it nice homely entertainment which leaves a definite impression behind. The illustrations have caught place, people and period very neatly and stimulate a good deal of interest at the outset.

KNIGHT, F. *Clippers to China.* Illus. by P. Jobson
269 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . . . Macmillan 10/6

This is the third in a series of books by Captain Frank Knight in which he plans to tell something of the romantic story of Britain's Merchant Service — showing the men and ships of the various periods in action. It is a fictitious story, pepped up with a villain, but it is based on an authentic background of events that might easily have happened, set in the real world of the 1860's.

The hero is a boy in his 'teens, the son of a shipowner who goes to sea in one of his father's tea clippers. By following his experiences we share something of the pleasures and perils

of windjammer life. Tim has to suffer the usual miseries of a "first-timer." He is bullied and shouted at and given harsh punishments with ropes' ends and vigils at the cross trees. Rapidly he is turned from mother's boy into a young sailor. There is a good exciting tale to give the social history a breeze. the bad-type first mate plots the skipper's death, runs one clipper on the rocks and comes home to claim the mastership of another. From the start he is clearly heading for the sticky end that waits for him near the last chapter. An unremarkable, but likable story, in the old sea yarn tradition.

LARSEN, E. *The True Book about Firefighting.* Illus. by F. S. May. 142 pp. 7½ × 5 . Muller 6/6

This is a straightforward history of the Firefighting Service, starting with the earliest preventative measures and ending with the high organisation of today. The methods as well as the organisation of the service are fully described and there are chapters on famous firefighters, and firefighting in such specialised places as ships and aeroplanes. There is thus adequate information here but the writing is poor, moving very uneasily and exhibiting a singular lack of polish. The illustrations and the whole production are somewhat uninspired.

LATHAM, R. O. *Trail Maker.* 95 pp. 7½ × 5 Lutterworth 3/6

This is a straightforward account of the life of David Livingstone from his early youth and labours in the mills of Blantyre, through the period of rigorous self-education, to his acceptance as a missionary in Africa. His life's work there, his contest with the slave trade, his search for the sources of the Nile, and the dramatic return of his body to rest in Wesminster Abbey, is all described simply and vividly. The book, however, could well have spared its lurid frontispiece.

MCCOURT, EDWARD. *Buckskin Brigadier.* Illus. by V. Mould. 150 pp. 8½ × 5½ . Macmillan 10/6

The setting of this contribution to the Great Stories of Canada series is the Cree uprising of 1885, and its leading figure is Major-General Tom Strange who organised and shaped into a fighting unit the so-called Alberta Field Force, compounded of raw Militia, cowboys, Mounted Police and others. He took it, eventually, from Calgary to Frog Lake, fighting the famous action of Frenchman's Butte en route. The march of over five hundred miles was a miracle of personal

control and energy for all circumstances, physical and administrative, combined to discourage both leaders and led. Full credit is also given to the indispensable contribution of Steele's Scouts whose constant watch and vast experience proved a match for the cunning and speed of the Indian adversary. The other side of the picture is not neglected and the attitude and purpose of the rebellious Indians is revealed through the accounts given by those who were their prisoners. Despite the ground it covers the history is concise as well as interesting, and a pleasing format enhances its value as a readable account of an important episode for a younger reader.

McNEILL, J. *My friend Specs McCann.* Illus. by R. Friers. 114 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . . Faber 8/6

First broadcast on the Northern Ireland Children's Hour the eleven stories in this book prove yet again that everything broadcast is not automatically fit to print without re-working. Each story has a fairly good idea behind it (sometimes familiar in other forms to adult readers) but fails to make full use of it, and after the first two or three the pattern becomes obvious. The schoolboy narrator works very hard to convince the audience that he and Specs are ordinary–schoolboys–just–like–you–brats, and there seems a good deal of repetition. The fantasy, usually about a short-term transformation of a master or the incursion of a mythical creature into school routine, simply has not been thought through. It does not go far enough and it seldom stands up to any sort of analysis. There is an appearance of neatness in the final paragraph of each story, but the author depends too much on these tag-lines for effect and the schoolboy talk for amusement. There is enough here to suggest that she is capable of more than she has provided, and just has not taken her work seriously enough to give real entertainment value. Despite the thin fantasy and predictable humour the stories may be mildly diverting and are probably harmless enough — the fact remains that they are completely unnecessary. The drawings show two hideous boys, but the jacket is fairly inviting.

McSWIGAN, M. *All aboard for freedom.* Illus. by E. H. Johnson. 249 pp. 7¾ × 9½ . Dent 9/6

This attractively illustrated book is an account, said to be based on fact, of life in occupied Czechoslovakia. The main characters are a group of orphans of Resistance heroes, threatened by the authorities with a State education. One of

them suggests that to avoid this they should escape into American Occupied Germany, by driving a train at full speed across the frontier. This coup is planned and led by a small boy, and needless to say, comes off. It is easy to understand why this book should have been published in America, a year or so ago; the climate of opinion at that time in that country required a "slanted" story in which "they" (i.e. the state) are endowed with all the sinister power of the Bogy-man of Napoleon's day; in which everything Russian or Communist is evil and everything American is good. This over-simplification made sense to Czech anti-communist refugees and to Republican schoolteachers in America. But it is difficult to see why it should be published in England now, when we are making a valiant attempt to co-exist, and have reached the stage at least, of knowing that there are good Russians as well as bad Americans — and English. Even allowing for the publishers' misjudging the development of world opinion in the last months, the spelling at least should surely have been Anglicised and the setting, dialogue and thoughts of these characters made more familiar to young English readers by judicious editing. As it is, the book appears to be set in small-town America, which is simply piling a Pelion of confusion upon an Ossa of misrepresentation. A footnote on the first page to the effect that throughout for "engineer" one should read "engine-driver" does no more than focus attention on a surprising lapse. Not many British children are likely to be impressed by this story or its teling.

MILLS, F. *Learn Boxing with Me.* Illus. 143 pp.
7¾ × 5¼ . . . . . Kaye 9/6

So far as boxing or any other sport may be learned or improved by study of a book this volume goes a long way towards giving adequate information in a small space. Mills not only lays down principles which appear sound to the lay mind but illustrates their value, or the need for their modification, with personal reminiscences. The most delightful impression received from the writer is that here was a boxer who was always ready to learn and who frankly admits that he was caught out often enough through ignoring the advice he puts together for his readers. The text is methodically arranged, working its way from stance and footwork, through punches, power and tactics, to training for the contest. A more general chapter on exercise can be of use to anyone

interested in bodily fitness and the book as a whole can benefit any reader who feels a need to condition himself for self-defence. The bold illustrations of each detail of each chapter are excellent for their purpose.

MITCHINSON, N. *The Land the ravens found.* Illus. by B. Allderidge. 192 pp. $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5$. Collins 8/6

TREECE, H. *Vikings dawn.* Illus. by C. Price 155 pp. 8×5 . . . . Bodley Head 9/6

Since the subject matter of these two books is about the same kind of people, they may perhaps fitly be considered together. Superficial resemblances, indeed, go further, for both are concerned with voyages by Norsemen which are arduous rather than spectacular, and, in fact, in the case of Mr. Treece's story, the adventure ends in almost complete disaster.

It is a good characteristic of authors who write seriously for children today that in the case of historical novels particularly there is a careful devotion to accuracy of background and of actual events, when an account of the latter enters into the work of fiction. This is wholly admirable where the skill of the writer contrives to avoid all trace of didacticism, and of these two books, whatever their difference of style and treatment, it may truly be said that no child who reads them intelligently can fail to know and understand a great deal that the history books will never make plain about those scourges of mediaeval Europe who were at the same time plunderers, colonists, traders, and intrepid explorers.

Mr. Treece's story is perhaps the more orthodox. It is the account of one ill-fated voyage in search of loot which must have been very like many unrecorded ones which set out in high hopes and ended in nameless disaster. Here are not the Vikings of legend, all-feared and all-conquering, but a band of sworn adventurers, quarelling, sea-buffeted, disappointed, frightened, yet recklessly courageous, drawn on by the unknown as much almost as by a hope of gain. This is a fine, and, one feels, authentic tale.

Mrs. Mitchison's great skill in evoking an intangible atmosphere of intense reality in which people of the past seem to live again was shown many years ago in *Black Sparta* and other classics. That skill is still with her. Here she takes as the bones of her story actual events of a thousand years ago, and sends her people, themselves descendants of Norse colonists and Irish kings, off on a migration from Caith-

ness to Iceland. Their life in Scotland, the arduous and hurried building of a boat by which to escape their dangers, the difficult voyage, and the adjustment to a harsher homeland, yet with fewer threats to their treasured freedom, is the whole tale. Its power lies in the beautiful prose, in an absorption with this distant world so complete that the reader becomes for the time part of it also, and in its deep human sympathies. It is not exactly a child's book, or not obviously so, though its hero, if there could really be said to be one, meets us as a young and wholly credible boy. It is a book indeed for anyone whose imagination can be touched and stirred by the past.

MORTON, K. F. *The Prize Winner and other stories.*
Illus. 114 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Dent 8/6

Twelve simple stories about individual animals — dogs, a donkey, a horse, a white cat, a monkey and a chaffinch. They are all connected in some way with the farm at Buttermilk Hall which has appeared in two earlier books by this author. They are stories for young children, showing off the intelligence and gentleness of animals and how they respond to love from their owners. Some are so slight that they are sketches rather than stories, quick pictures of particular creatures. Some are full stories, touching from their very simplicity like *The Water Dog* and *The Old Horse*. The stories are nearly all illustrated with photographs which, although admittedly not of the animals told about, underline the truth of their tales.

NORTHCOTT, C. *Forest Doctor: The Story of Albert Schweitzer.* 93 pp. 7½ × 5 . Lutterworth 3/6

This further title in the *Stories of Faith and Fame* series exhibits the same poor quality of production but the writing has some merit. Dr. Schweitzer is indeed a great and marvellous man and the author has conveyed something of the multiplicity of his achievements, something of his spirit and faith. The writer has been inspired by his subject and there is verve and insight, colour and feeling, in the short but vivid story. There can be no claim to literary merit here but the short, clipped, and terse account matches the stern determination of Schweitzer himself. Many religious biographies, atlhough seeking to do otherwise, bring little but detriment to their subjects. This story does brief justice to its subject,

OLIVER, J. *Young Man With a Sword.* Illus. by W. McLaren. 278 pp. 8 × 5¼ . Macmillan 10/6

This is a very fine historical novel with a story — of Robert Bruce's liberation of Scotland — which could hardly fail. Miss Oliver's history, it goes without saying, is sound; she has, too, considerable gifts as a narrator, a sense of timing and a sincere feeling for character. She traces her great events through the fortunes of a small noble family, and her domestic interiors are no less appealing and convincing than her battle scenes. The same cannot be said for the illustrations; Mr. McLaren handles his melées deftly, his close-ups are remarkably poor .

PARDOE, M. *The Dutch Boat.* Illus. by L. Atkinson 191 pp. 7¾ × 5½ . . Hodder & Stoughton 9/6

The author has proceeded gently with this story. There is no rushing into action here but a quiet mingling with the young people of the tale and a long introduction to the Dutch scene, its land and its peoples. Peter and John Barnard and Mary Gray of previous adventures are here again, bringing with them their love of boats and the sea, and of course a mystery and an excitement. This time they make a trip to Holland to join their friend, Mr. Latchmere, and while waiting for him when he is delayed for a few days, become involved in the theft of some rare tulip bulbs. With the help of Mr. Latchmere they finally track down the thief, but only after a chase across the sea to England and a game of hide and seek in this country. The young people are, as so many of their fictitious kind, a little too clever and a little too licensed for credibility but their manner is plausible. The writing too, although exhibiting no finesse, convinces by its lively matter-of-fact tone. It is the long introductory and colourful largo that brings us to Holland and shows us its ways and scenes in such detail that gives the story its depth, while the finishing allegro provides the necessary focal point of action.

PARKER, A. *Let's do some Acting.* Illus. by D. Tull 63 pp. 8 × 5 . . . Bodley Head 5/–

A useful little book of advice to schoolboy and schoolgirl actors, directed mainly to those aged ten to fifteen who are trying to run the show themselves without much grown-up supervision. The style is simple, so are the gay red and black illustrations and diagrams (plenty of them); the book has an unsophisticated air. But young readers need not be

deterred by this — there are common sense and many valuable hints to be found here. Headings include "Casting the Parts," "Acting," "The Stage Manager," "Scenery" (most helpful, this, for the simplest stage), "Make-up" and "Effects" — how to make the right "Noises Off" and much else.

PATCHETT, M. E. *Undersea treasure hunters.* Illus. by J. Kiddell-Monroe. 180 pp. 8 × 5¼. Lutterworth 7/6

In spite of writing so many books in a short space, Mrs. Patchett usually keeps a reliable standard. This new book covers some of the same ground as the last "Ajax" story, but adds even more information about the Great Barrier Reef area, and a great deal of advice on skin-diving techniques. The four Brevitt children, who go with their Uncle and his sad little French nephew on a camping expedition, are nice, natural young people, and the party is well balanced so that the book will appeal to several age groups. The underwater scenes are enticing, in spite of the danger encountered at times, and the whole area is still unknown enough to be of interest. In view of Mrs. Patchett's very commendable views on the unnecessary slaughter of sea-life, the choice of a harpoonist on the cover seems unfortunate. Some of the other drawings fall below Miss Kiddell-Monroe's standard. Though not a major contribution this can be recommended as a travel, family, nature, diving or even as a treasure-hunting story, and should please on all counts.

PATCHETT, M. E. *Treasure of the Reef.* Illus. by J. Kiddell-Monroe. 203 pp. 7½ × 5. Lutterworth 7/6

Another book about the heroine of Ajax the Warrior and Tam the Untamed. On this occasion, she goes with her three dogs and her parents to spend a Christmas vacation on the Great Barrier Reef. Here she meets the four permanent residents Bron and his aboriginal servant Nooroo and Rosie with her maid Loogoona. Christmas is celebrated in a somewhat unorthodox fashion by having a feast of turtle and the problem of what to give as presents is solved by using a little originality. With her parents recalled to their farm to cope with the damage caused by a fire, the heroine is left in the care of Bron and Rosie, to discover the wonders and mysteries of the reef.

The characterisation is satisfactory, but the chief quality of the book is its detailed and colourful descriptions of the reef, its formation, the wild life that abounds there and the life that is led by people who choose to reside there.

PATCHETT, M. E. *"Your call, Miss Gaynor."* Illus. by B. Martin. 222 pp. 8 × 5¼ . Lutterworth 7/6

Like her *Evening Star*, Mrs. Patchett's new book presents some not altogether believable but most agreeable people and situations, gives some sound and interesting information and advice about the theatre, and includes some appreciative dog-studies. The book is light and wish-fulfilling and good of its kind. There are a great many characters and much incident, and if some of the material is almost too story-bookish, it still makes good reading. Two lively heroines and their lovable family and circle of friends ensure a good flow of dialogue of the half-mocking variety dear to most teen-agers. Pan Gaynor's sudden realization of her urge to act provides a special thrill, her actress-grandmother's death a special emotion, and the solving of various problems gives a feeling of dealing with adult life which they will also enjoy. As for the dogs, Mrs. Patchett's own feeling leads to occasional over-indulgence but her description is more often delightful and her enthusiasm most infectious, as is her enthusiasm for people and the theatre. Her books in this category read as though they were written quickly, but from a sound knowledge of young people. They are welcome as a wholesome presentation of the glamour-career combination usually found in less recommendable form. The glimpses of school pantomime, production in a private, perfectly equipped theatre, drama school, repertory experience in the provinces and Ireland and London stardom leave the reader in a happy daze, but without too many false illusions. Some of the illustrations are adequate, the rest are poor.

PEARCE, A. P. *Minnow on the Say*. Illus. by E. Ardizzone. 241 pp. 8¾ × 5½ . . O.U.P. 10/6

In the field of book-publishing, as in other fields, there are inexplicable alternations of lean and rich seasons and we seem at present to be enjoying a vintage period for children's books. The Oxford Press has been responsible for many of the delights this year and promises more to come; some may equal this, the first book by an unusually accomplished beginner, but few can be more satisfying. The story is captivating from the

beginning, when young David finds the canoe, Minnow, bobbing against the landing-stage on the river Say. Adam, her owner, becomes his fast friend and the boys embark on a well-plotted search for the treasure hidden by Adam's Elizabethan ancestor. There is a neat balance of hopes and disappointments, and the reader's concern for Adam and his aunt causes him to share their feelings for the shabby old house whose future is threatened with their own, and heightens the suspense. At the same time the aunt's outburst when Adam uproots a prize rose in his mania is a welcome reminder that some things matter more than treasures, and the same sense of proportion is maintained elsewhere. The boys are a well matched, likable pair, and their conversation rings true, while the adults, who might easily have been only "character" parts, *have* character instead. Many children will recognise something of their own fathers in David's — silent, just, but so regretful over David's loss of his wheelbarrow that its recovery is a triumph second only to the grand climax in which the treasure is revealed. And what a relief to meet a bus-driver who is a person instead of a conscientious exponent of lower-middle class virtues! The other characters are just as clearly seen, the humour is quiet but constant, and there is that ingredient of consciousness of the past working in the present — the past of individuals, families, and the town — which always adds a special dimension. The interest of clue-detection during a first reading is replaced in later readings by an appreciation of the clues themselves and by increased pleasure in the people encountered on the search. The final scenes are all that could be desired, the treasure found, all the principal characters gathered together to drink the Flower Wine which provided the last clue, and David and Adam looking forward to the next summer with Minnow on the Say. Ardizzone's engaging boys are right at home in this summery book, and he has obviously enjoyed his work. The publishers assign the age-range 10-12, but the book could be read aloud sooner and will probably be re-read later.

PERTWEE, R. *Operation Wild Goose.* Illus. by E. H. Shepard. 203 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. O.U.P. 10/6

Perhaps it is a mistake to look too earnestly into a book intended purely as light entertainment, but even the most high-spirited book need not be irresponsible. There are a number of good moments in this third book about the Islanders

— the English party's voyage to Iceland, experiments in fishing and painting, even a moment of sympathy for the girl of the party, who is otherwise a new entrant into the unappealing heroine field. But the main issue is the peacetime race of English and Communists to stake a claim on an Icelandic uranium field. The English group, including two oh-so-flippant young MI-5 agents, make a series of unforgivable diplomatic and tactical blunders, but are forgiven because they are so English. The only real villain opposing them is the renegade Icelandic guide, the Russian's chief villainy consisting of his shooting (in all innocence) the bird the Islanders have come to see. Toby and Pat and the old Hungarian scientist who plans to join the West are more likable than the other characters, who seem to come straight from a review skit on the good old days. The laboured broken English, with all its plays on words like "backside" is more like provincial music-hall material, while the jokes about slave-labour camps are just plain bad taste. Most of the genuinely comic and dangerous aspects of Communist Russia are overlooked in favour of the routine "humour" and villainy assigned to the wicked of all countries in books by authors far below what Mr. Pertwee has shown *can* be his standard. In spite of his card-stacking, the Russian's behaviour is superior on the whole to that of the English party, and his final downfall comes because he trusts the word of honour of the English, and is double-crossed. Both sides seem equally desirous of violence, but the English are even less courteous than the unfriendly Russian, and undeniably smug. Somehow the book seems a little too like the sort of thing Col. Blimp would have enjoyed in his boyhood (certainly the slang of his time couldn't sound more dated than the R.A.F. slang still used by the Islanders). There will be many who will like this slick little comedy-adventure tale with its manufactured plot and occasional glimpses of reality, but its implication that whatever the English do is right and whatever the Russians do is bound to be stupid, silly, dangerous or suspicious can hardly help pave the way to conversion on their side or peacefulness on ours.

PHILLIPS, M. *Two of red and two of blue.* Illus. by D. Walsh. 176 pp. $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$. Lutterworth 7/6

A Ruritanian tale with a mediaeval setting this modest, fast-moving tale is told in the very modern words of a far from modest but equally fast-moving young hero, who is over insistent about his love of action, battle and mischief, sur-

prisingly impressed by rank and horribly immature in his idea of humour. He also believes that elders and superiors *should* be rough on boys and servants, but he makes up for a good deal by his somewhat foolhardy brand of courage. As both narrator and principal figure of a loyalist attempt to regain the throne of Estanivatzia he must be in the thick of things without understanding quite what they involve, and in spite of his heavily Philistine attitudes he has enough cocksure character to keep the reader's interest, and is a fit citizen of the melodramatic world he inhabits, with its involved relationships and invented titles. The main justification of the book is the author's success in making the final moves a complete surprise, which also makes the book seem better than it really is. The illustrations are definitely better than books of this type are usually allotted, showing careful planning and execution. Not a necessary item, but one that may be purchased without qualms.

PICARD, B. L. *Stories of King Arthur and his knights*
Illus. by A. Morgan. 292 pp. $5\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. O.U.P. 12/6

No single version of the Arthurian legends available for children today is completely self-sufficient, but Miss Picard's new rendering is a welcome addition to the chosen few one would like to see in every collection, and seems the most likely to lead the general reader on to more specialist versions. Like her re-telling of the Odyssey, this rendering is extremely lucid and coherent, and while comparison with B. K. Cooke's little Malory trilogy makes Miss Picard's (and every other adaptor's) choice of words seem rather flat, she has been gratifyingly consistent in her treatment, avoiding the false-archaic and also the excessively basic English and occasional 20th century phrases which mar some otherwise recommendable versions. As the title implies, Arthur and his knights fill most of the picture, crowding out most of the enchanters and much of the framework of magic and religion. In spite of the many challenges and combats the atmosphere is serene and springlike on the whole. The interpretation *is* sometimes quite 20th century, and although the clear understanding given of the position of Sir Kay, of Lancelot and Guenevere and of Arthur is a gain, it seems regrettable that Miss Picard's delicacy of feeling has also led her to alter her story of Meliagrance. Perhaps she had some sanction, however, for making it a kindlier tale than most versions extant.

Other editions will be wanted to supplement this, just as this will supplement them — notably Hadfield, to fill in the background and explain, as nothing else seems to, the nature of the religious symbols; Green, for additional stories and entertaining variants, and Cooke, for the more difficult but vastly more vivid and exciting language. But the skilful simplicity of Miss Picard's telling and the attractive format, with the somewhat stark wood-engravings made more pleasing and effective by wellplaced green, should appeal to a particularly wide audience.

PRICE, W. *Underwater Adventure.* Illus. by P. Marriott. 204 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . Cape 9/6

Mr. Willard Price has undoubtedly the knack of presenting his extensive knowledge of marine life attractively in the course of a tale full of adventure and incident. In the latter respect *Underwater Adventure* is perhaps a bit too much of it. In addition to novelties such as aqualung diving and the underwater sled, not to mention a diving bell, we have a sneak who is also a murderer by indirect means, and the father and mother of all typhoons to finish with. The heroes of this medley are old friends in the persons of Hal and Roger Hunt who for good measure find a treasure ship, the secondary object of their expedition in the "Lively Lady," among the atolls of the South Seas. These extravagances aside, the book is informative and entertaining, fast-moving and lucid, providing a good picture of submarine life in the Pacific seas.

PRYS-JONES, A. G. *Gerald of Wales.* Illus. 125 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . . Harrap 7/6

Few people could be better qualified than the author to write this account of Giraldus Cambrensis. He has been an Inspector of Schools, is a well-known literary figure and has a sense of humour which enables him to give a balanced view of the odd but inquisitive man who forms the subject of his book. Giraldus was a Welsh priest of the thirteenth century who was at one time sent on a recruiting mission for the Crusade. He kept diaries in Latin which have been one of the most interesting sources of local colour in Welsh history. Not that Gerald dealt invariably in pure fact for he seems to have been pretty credulous concerning local superstitions and minor miracles. All the same, his is the best record we have of what was done, thought or said in Wales in his times, and what Mr. Prys-Jones has done is to present in extremely

readable form the matter contained in Gerald's two books, *Itinerary through Wales* and *Description of Wales*. The style is simple but fluid and the author and publisher have made a valuable contribution to lighter historical literature in preparing this version of an ancient first-hand account of our Welsh forbears, and of some of their English or Norman contemporaries.

SALMON, R. *My True Adventure Stories*. Illus. by V. Jarman. 142 pp. 7½ × 5 . Heinemann 6/–

If the style of this book matched its incident it would amount to more than a hill of beans, but as it is the writing does not invite wholehearted acceptance of some of the adventures recounted in it though these are varied enough and well put together. But perhaps for the youthful mind credibility is less important than excitement and when it is mentioned that Mr. Salmon has been able to include stories of himself as pilot, commando, cowboy, jungle explorer and cattle rancher it will be clear that here is the stuff boys like though it may do them little good beyond entertaining them. One does not doubt the author's veracity; one only wishes that he had the gift of making himself *sound* a little more convincing.

SUTCLIFF, R. *Outcast*. Illus. by R. Kennedy 229 pp. 8½ × 5½ . . . . . O.U.P. 10/6

Miss Sutcliff seems to go from strength to strength, and this stirring reconstruction of four hard years in the life of a tough young Roman-Briton shows her scholarship sound as ever, with the facts slipping easily into place with no suggestion of text-book flavour, her eye for colour and feeling for places clear as ever without the occasional spilling-over of emotion found in some of her earlier work. Beric, a Roman baby cast up by the sea, is cast out by the clan of Britons who foster him until he is sixteen, kidnapped by Greek slavers before he can gain acceptance as a Roman, sold into a Roman family, escapes and is sent to the galleys for his most gruelling experience, and loses all hope and faith in man. In the final chapters he is slowly rehabilitated by Justinius, a Roman engineer draining the British marshes, and the last page finds him capable of considering the Legion, secure now that he has a place of his own behind him.

Although his life has been one long struggle in often desperate conditions, Miss Sutcliff avoids the extreme savagery

of Henry Treece's historical books, nor does her picture seem less authentic. We still have displaced people and slave-labourers and undoubtedly those earlier ages also had people who saw the human being behind the outcast and the slave. Nor are all exploiters of slavery necessarily sadists — more often they are people like ourselves accepting a convention; an understanding of the slave's emotions rather than a description of the master's cruelty is the best preventative against further acceptance.

This story ranges wide and shows many unfamiliar and stimulating aspects of the Roman Empire; the characters stand out as living people — dowdy, kindly little Lady Lucilla, Justinius, and a host of minor characters — at ease in their setting. Both boys and girls with an interest in the past (and some who think they have none) should find this a book very much to their taste.

SYME, R. *They came to an Island.* Illus. by W. Stobbs. 157 pp. 7½ × 5. Hodder & Stoughton 7/6

This is a good, unusual story, based on fact, and like the illustration on the book jacket, square and sound and stolid. It concerns Jo, a South Sea Island boy, who sails on the Pacific Ocean with Captain Deysbrook in his ship the "Pride 'o Devon." They are shipwrecked with other members of the crew on an uninhabited island, to be picked up there by a ship of very doubtful character, a ship carrying native labour to Peru. This fact leads to mutiny and to a landing on another South Sea Island. Here Jo, and his Captain and shipmates, come into contact with a native people, and all their culture and tradition, temporarily curtailed although it may be by Mr. Thomas the missionary, a zealous but misguided, terrible yet likable man. They are guided by these native people to treasure in the lagoon off the beach and although this is a slightly blurred element in the scene it is the only blurred one and the general distinction of scene and character lends it definition and unusual attraction. The mutiny has continued effects that thread their way through the story to an exciting climax. Mr. Syme has given us a grand and stimulating picture of real people in a real age, thinking and behaving according to their environment. His imagination goes behind the facts to give a spirited and sympathetic projection of the sailor and the South Sea Islander some years ago.

WHITE, H. *Holiday in Rome.* Illus. by Selva
176 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . Harrap 7/6

A poor, pasteboard story. The conventional, unattractive heroine is recovering from an illness in Rome. She is discontented and sorry for herself because her planned career as a sports mistress has now to be abandoned. There seems nothing left in the world worth taking an interest in. Then some jolly Americans and an eager naval officer's family shake her up and begin to open her eyes to the glories and history of Rome. The present suddenly gives way to the past when she reads part of the American woman's manuscript about Rome at the time of Garibaldi and his Red shirts. When Janice comes back to Now it is with brighter eyes, keen to see the sights, wanting to learn the language, prepared to find life tolerable even in a world in which she will never play hockey again.

It is a sensible enough lesson, but poorly put across, and no glitter of real life is evoked by Miss White's stories and descriptions of Rome.

WHITTLE, T. *Spades and feathers.* Illus. by R. Sheppard. 222 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . Cape 9/6

This book gives the impression of owing something, at least in spirit, to Arthur Ransome. Two groups of children, the Streatfields and the Frys, call themselves the Spaniards and the Elizabethans; they own two half-deckers, Piper and Piglet, in which they sail in search of adventure on the Norfolk Broads. Grandfather Streatfield answers to the name of Philip of Spain and early in the book the children are befriended by one of those heaven-sent bachelor artists who opens heart and house to the treasure-hunting enthusiasts.

The Spaniards and the Elizabethans are looking for the lost plate of St. Benet's Abbey. This involves finding the ruins of a long forgotten mill, excavating them and finally unearthing treasure of a sort.

But the children are caught up in ornithology as well as in archaeology. Uncle Bertie, an eccentric bird fanatic solicits their help in recording the song of a couple of rare avocets and in keeping a rival — an equally peculiar Irishman — at bay.

The story moves briskly and the interlocking plots have enough action to hold a child's interest; a young reader must not, however, expect to learn very much about either of the 'ologies.

The book has one or two minor faults. The conversation of the youngsters is too liberally peppered with "golly," "gosh," "wizard" and "jolly"; one of the boys, normally intelligent and bright, knows neither the meaning of the word "index" nor what an index is for; Uncle Bertie is quite happy to use an electric fire on damp ground without an earth and with cable that runs through water.

Raymond Sheppard's illustrations of birds are clear and life-like; those of people are much less satisfactory.

WYATT, H. *The Young Traveller in Portugal*
Illus. 160 pp. 7½ × 5 . . Phoenix House 8/6

The publishers maintain, and even improve upon, the high standard of this series with this the latest addition. We again accompany two children as they travel in and learn about a new country but this time the parents take as prominent a part and the stream of facts and information has a more digested and natural outlet. It seems apparent that the author has based the story on her own experiences with her own family and we see it all through the eyes of the mother who is travelling that she might write a book. All this gives an air of greater authenticity. The view of Portugal is broad and expansive and beautiful, giving a full introduction and a tempting invitation. So many sights and sounds are here and so many real people. Towns immersed in tradition and culture, villages sleepy with age and heat, quiet hot country byways, cold misty riverside mornings, and the work of home and farm and factory are here to see and feel while the warm and friendly people of Portugal continually gather round. This warmth and friendliness and a jolly humour emanate from the whole book. The parents of the children are likable and if the children are just a little precocious they nevertheless display the right kind of healthy interest and general vivaciousness. Only when supposed extracts from letters and diaries of the children are given is the writing at all strained and this is probably only in contrast to the gay easiness of the rest of the work.

FOR THE INTERMEDIATE LIBRARY

ALLAN, M. E. *Judith Teaches.* 191 pp. 7 × 5½
Bodley Head 7/6

In this addition to the Career Books for Girls the facts and realities of a teacher's first years are most skilfully interwoven with the fictional narrative. We have not only been

given a story interesting in itself; Miss Allan has managed to establish throughout the book the attitude of mind which must be developed by any teacher who is to maintain her competence without infringing on her sanity. No doubt in some quarters Judith Prestwood's outlook on children and teaching might be condemned as sentimental but I am of the opinion that schools would be happier and more effective if her attitude were more widespread than it seems to be. Naturally, within the limit of its length the book telescopes much and emphasises the heights and depths of elation and despair while the longer, duller interludes of school life tend to appear to have been eliminated but there are definite indications that such do exist. The reasonable teacher knows this and knows also that the occasional triumphs of temporary perfection are worth aiming for, for the sake of the teacher and the taught. Both benefit from a feeling of accomplishment and this idea is certainly demonstrated here On the Career side, the bias is for girls who are likely to take up work in a secondary modern school, and in larger towns. There is no attempt to glamorise the profession or its prospects, but the compensations and reliefs to be derived from keeping a sense of proportion about the job are clearly set out. In this book, to put it briefly, the reader is shown what teaching is really like.

BAYLEY, V. *Lebanon adventure.* Illus. by M. L. Foster. 191 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . . . Dent 9/6

A good combination of travel book and mystery story, with the two young Wycliffes and their adopted brother, whose great-aunt arranges their visit to her home outside Beirut. Someone has been trying to frighten her into leaving the house and without her knowledge the three young people start detecting and deducing in the intervals left by trips round the Lebanon and Syria. Their enquiring minds and easy relationship make the outcome seem important, as does the spirit of the old lady — such charming people should succeed, and of course they do. The suspense is under control and only the final revelation is melodramatic, but the mystery provides a framework for the travel scenes, which lack the forced, guide-book appearance of the descriptions found in so many books about holiday hikers. Miss Bayley was evidently impressed and is able to communicate her impressions so that they hold their own in a book which will be chosen as a

mystery. The dialogue is handled well and there are several amusing minor characters — the book reads quickly and added feeling for the Middle East will probably stay with the reader. Boys or girls of Secondary School age should find it agreeable light reading.

CLARK, R. *Come climbing with me.* Illus. 160 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . . Muller 9/6

For the novice rock-climber, nothing can teach like experience; the feel of boots and fingers on the rock itself and the friendly supervision of a practised climber are the finest of all training.

Mr. Clark's book, then, must not be regarded as a substitute for actual climbing but as an introduction and companion. The author writes with the confidence of an expert on equipment, technique and a variety of subjects allied to climbing — camping, suitable districts to visit, hill walking, weather, clubs to join. Mr. Beck's clear diagrams and drawings help a simple, explanatory text.

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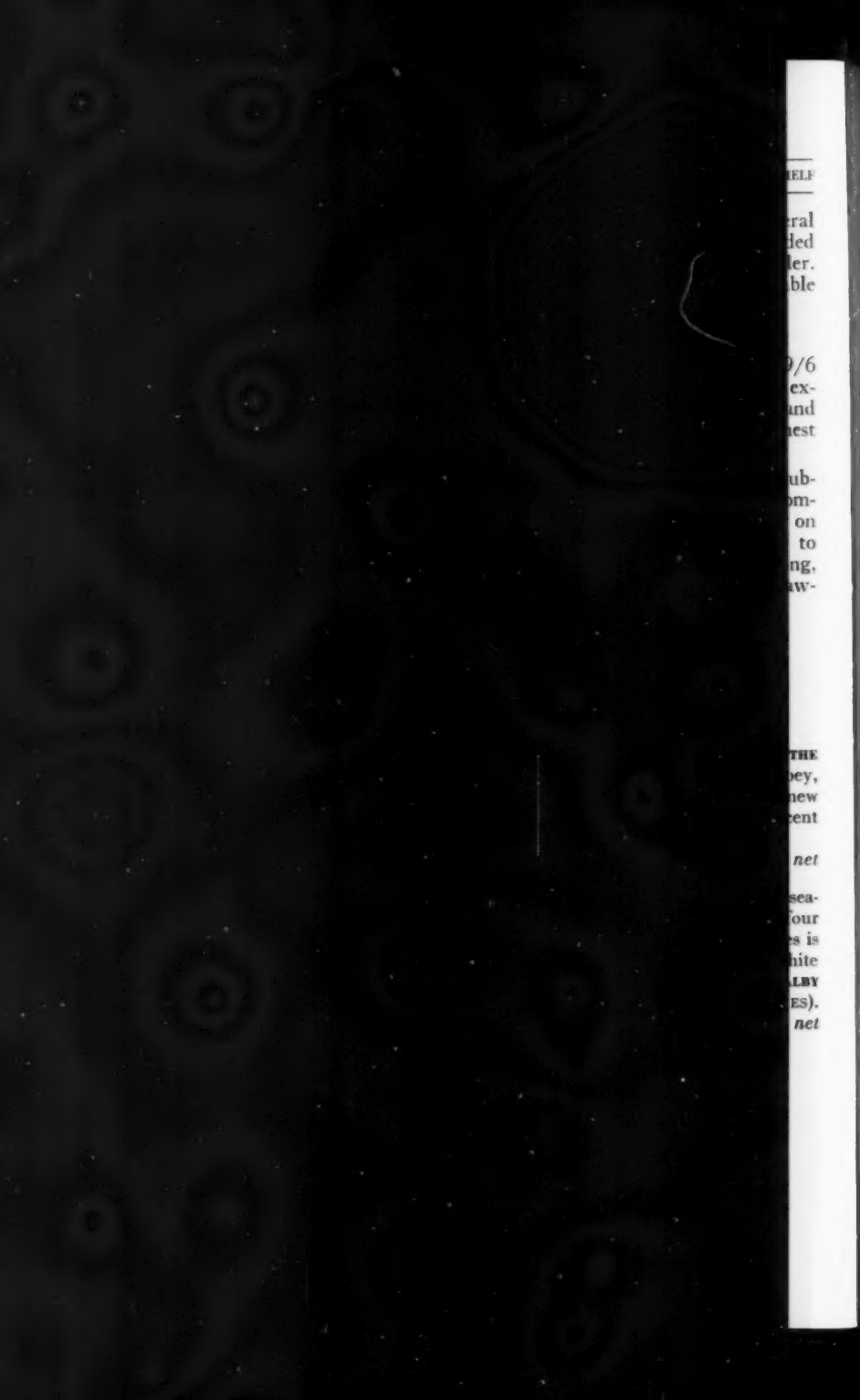

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